

VZCZCXRO1979
OO RUEHGI RUEHMA RUEHROV RUEHTRO
DE RUEHKH #0621/01 1321020
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 121020Z MAY 09 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3747
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTJ HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000621

DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/USSES, AF A/S CARSON, AF/C
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND HUDSON
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#) [SOCI](#) [KPKO](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: DARFUR ROUNDUP: FIGHTING IN DAR ZAGHAWA; JANJAWOOD RUN WILD
IN EL FASHER; ARMING OF ARAB TRIBES IN KABKABIYA

REFS: A. KHARTOUM 583
[1](#)B. NDJAMENA 162

KHARTOUM 00000621 001.3 OF 003

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) forces clashed with those of SLA/Minnawi near Umm Barro on May 9, according to rebel and UNAMID sources. Independent verification was not available, and both sides offered competing claims to victory. According to an SLA/M rep, five of his movement's fighters were killed and several dozen injured. UNAMID confirmed it medevaced 16 injured SLA/M fighters from Umm Barro to El Fasher on May 10. Meanwhile, the North Darfur capital of El Fasher was tense on May 8-9 following several shootouts between the SAF and Arab militiamen from the Border Intelligence Forces (BIF) in the town's main market. In Kabkabiya, stronghold of notorious Janjaweed leader Musa Hilal, the GOS is providing Arab tribal groups with significant financial and logistical support, according to a recently returned civil society activist. Tribal elders there lament the increase in drug and alcohol use among Arab youth, and worry that the latter will be used in future military operations, possibly across the border in Chad. End Summary.

JEM CLASHES WITH SLA/MINNAWI NEAR UM BARRO

[1](#)2. (SBU) UNAMID sources told poloff that on May 8 an SAF Antonov aircraft was observed dropping bombs in the vicinity of a place called Orchi, between Um Barro and Furawiya in far North Darfur. The local population reported that they saw JEM forces moving northward through Orchi that morning, and alleged that JEM captured the Minnawi commander in Furawiya (Minnawi's hometown). On May 9, a convoy of approximately 40 JEM vehicles reportedly was seen at Um Barro moving northeast. Soon after, about 160 local residents (mostly women and children) sought protection at the UNAMID camp in Umm Barro, alleging that fighting was ongoing between JEM and SLA/M. The clashes stopped after an hour, and locals started moving back to their homes.

[1](#)3. (SBU) UNAMID planned to send a patrol to Furawiya and Orchi on May 10 to investigate, but cancelled it after reports of renewed fighting there. However, on May 10 a UNAMID security assessment patrol to Umm Barro town did observe an Antonov bombing in the vicinity of Furawiya. (Note: Sudanese Armed Forces SAF Spokesman Osman al-Aghbash denied SAF involvement in the clashes, stating that the fighting was between JEM and SLM/M. End Note.) Unconfirmed reports allege that on the morning of May 10 JEM forces attacked SLA/M positions and sporadic fighting lasted for six hours.

BOTH SIDES CLAIM VICTORY

¶4. (SBU) Without independent verification of the clashes, JEM and SLA/M traded accusations in the media. In a statement on JEM's website on May 9, JEM Military Spokesman Ali Al Wafi asserted that on May 10 JEM troops, along with a number of political figures, moved in a "logistical convoy to support the people of Darfur, to discuss their problems and to brief them about the current situation" when they were allegedly attacked by SLA/M forces. Al Wafi claimed that JEM repelled the attack and seized weapons and equipment.

¶5. (SBU) SLA/Minawi Spokesman Zunoon Suliman, meanwhile, told Al Wifaq newspaper that JEM troops attacked SLA/M positions near Muzbad with several hundred vehicles mounted with artillery weapons. He alleged the involvement of former Minawi commander Arko Suleiman Dahia, reportedly responsible for JEM's January-February 2009 sneak attack on SLA/M forces in Muhajeriya, and newly- recruited former SLA/Unity Commander Salih Jarbo, along with several others. Suliman stated that JEM's intent was to attack and destroy SLA/M completely, but that SLA/M troops successfully repelled the attack and pursued JEM back to the Chadian border.

¶6. (SBU) Former SLA/M Ceasefire Commission (CFC) Representative Adam Ali Ware told poloff on May 11 that SLA/M suffered some losses as a result of the clashes, including five dead and over 20 wounded, although most injuries were slight. UNAMID medevaced 16 of the injured SLA/M fighters, whom along with 14 escorts were flown from Umm Barro to El Fasher for treatment at a GOS military hospital. It was unclear how many casualties were suffered by JEM, said Ware, but he reported rumors that JEM's newly- recruited, former SLA/Unity Commander Salih Jarbo was killed in the fighting. Jarbo, the right-hand man of Suleiman Jamous, allegedly was involved in the skirmish between JEM forces and SLA/Unity forces near Um Rai in April (ref. A). Ware said he believed JEM's aggression was part of "an implicit agreement it has with the GOS to destroy all other

KHARTOUM 00000621 002.2 OF 003

movements in Darfur" so it can be the only rebel party to peace talks in Doha. According to a UNAMID source, although not confirmed, JEM is now believed to be present at Birmaza, Birdik and Um Rai, extending its military positions to areas recently controlled by SLA/Minawi and SLA/Unity. NISS Director General Salah Ghosh told CDA Fernandez at lunch on May 7 that he expected JEM to make an attempt on one of Darfur's main towns soon while it seeks to crush the remaining independent rebel groups and co-opt the regime's Arab tribal allies.

JANJAWOOD RUN WILD IN EL FASHER TOWN

¶7. (SBU) In El Fasher, the security situation has deteriorated rapidly following clashes between SAF soldiers and Arab militiamen now part of the Border Intelligence Force (BIF). According to UNDSS, on the afternoon of May 8 a quarrel between militiamen and a SAF officer in El Fasher's main market area resulted in the SAF officer being shot and rushed in serious condition to El Fasher Military Hospital. After the incident, the GOS Military Commander dispatched several dozen soldiers to "calm" the situation (apparently by shooting randomly in the air.) In the ensuing chaos, a number of shops left unattended by fleeing shopkeepers were looted. The militiamen reportedly escaped with six assault rifles taken from the SAF. On May 9, a group of militiamen again exchanged fire with SAF soldiers in El Fasher market, killing at least one soldier and four civilians, according to UNDSS.

¶8. (SBU) In the wake of the market melee, GOS Minister of Defense Abdelrahim Hussein visited El Fasher on May 10, reportedly to address the growing SAF-BIF tensions. However, a well-placed civil society figure in El Fasher told FSN Political Assistant (polasst) that this was not the case. "[Hussein] wouldn't care if all of El Fasher was set on fire," he said, noting that Hussein instead had come to personally supervise the re-arming of defeated Chadian rebel forces. UNDSS sources confirmed the presence of a truck convoy moving north through Habila town on El Geneina road on May 8 consisting of large commercial vehicles loaded with Chadian rebels carrying light machine gun-type weapons. The column appeared to be

moving toward the border, rather than returning from the recent failed offensive in eastern Chad. (Note: A May 12 headline in pro-government Khartoum daily Akbar Al Youm proclaimed that the Chadian rebels from Union des Forces de la Resistance (UFR) will resume the march on N'Djamena in 24 hours. End Note.)

ARAB MILITIA REARMING IN KABKABIYA

¶9. (SBU) On May 7, polasst spoke with Ahmed Adam Yousif, a civil society leader who runs a respected NGO focusing on grassroots peace and reconciliation in Darfur. Having just returned from the town of Kabkabiya (stronghold of prominent Janjaweed leader Musa Hilal) where he conducted workshops in reconciliation for traditional native administration leaders, Yousif reported that Abbala (camel herding) Rizeigat Arab tribal groups (including Mahariya, Mahamid and Awlad Rashid) are receiving significant new financial and logistical support from the GOS. Each group possesses new Toyota Landcruisers mounted with advanced weapons, communications equipment, cash, and apparent permission to cross borders into neighboring countries. Yousif reported that Arab elders worry that the GOS will enlist their youth in future military operations across the border in Chad, noting that six thousand militiamen have been sent to the Chadian border. They also lamented that the government has corrupted Arab youth, noting the increase in the drug and alcohol trade within these marginalized Arab nomadic communities.

Comment

¶10. (SBU) JEM's actions in North Darfur demonstrate not only its desire to establish itself as the sole rebel military power by eliminating weaker rivals, but also its drive for territory; as long as JEM remains based in Chad, it cannot credibly claim to represent the Darfur cause at the Doha talks. By attempting to crush or absorb SLA/Minnawi and SLA/Unity commanders over the past several months, JEM has made inroads into territory held (or formerly held) by those groups. This is most certainly not the last foray into Darfur we will see as JEM tries to stake its claim. With the Antonov bombings that will inevitably follow every JEM border incursion, this bodes ill for innocent North Darfur civilians caught between equally ruthless rebels and government forces. In terms of developments in Kabkabiya, the GOS arming of the so-called Janjaweed is certainly not new. However, the events in El Fasher market show how difficult it is for these unruly and ill-disciplined militiamen

KHARTOUM 00000621 003.2 OF 003

to be controlled, even when incorporated into the larger GOS military apparatus (although the BIF and other paramilitary groups that have absorbed former Janjaweed are not under SAF control, but rather that of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) and/or the Ministry of Interior.) Even if a comprehensive ceasefire is eventually reached between the GOS and the myriad rebel factions, until the Janjaweed are reined-in there will be little hope for a secure passage home for Darfur's internally displaced persons. The Khartoum regime seeks to use Janjaweed as shock troops or cannon fodder in Darfur's many conflicts but they are wary of central control and are just as likely to switch sides and turn on their masters if Khartoum's largesse ever dries up and potential new patrons emerge. .

FERNANDEZ